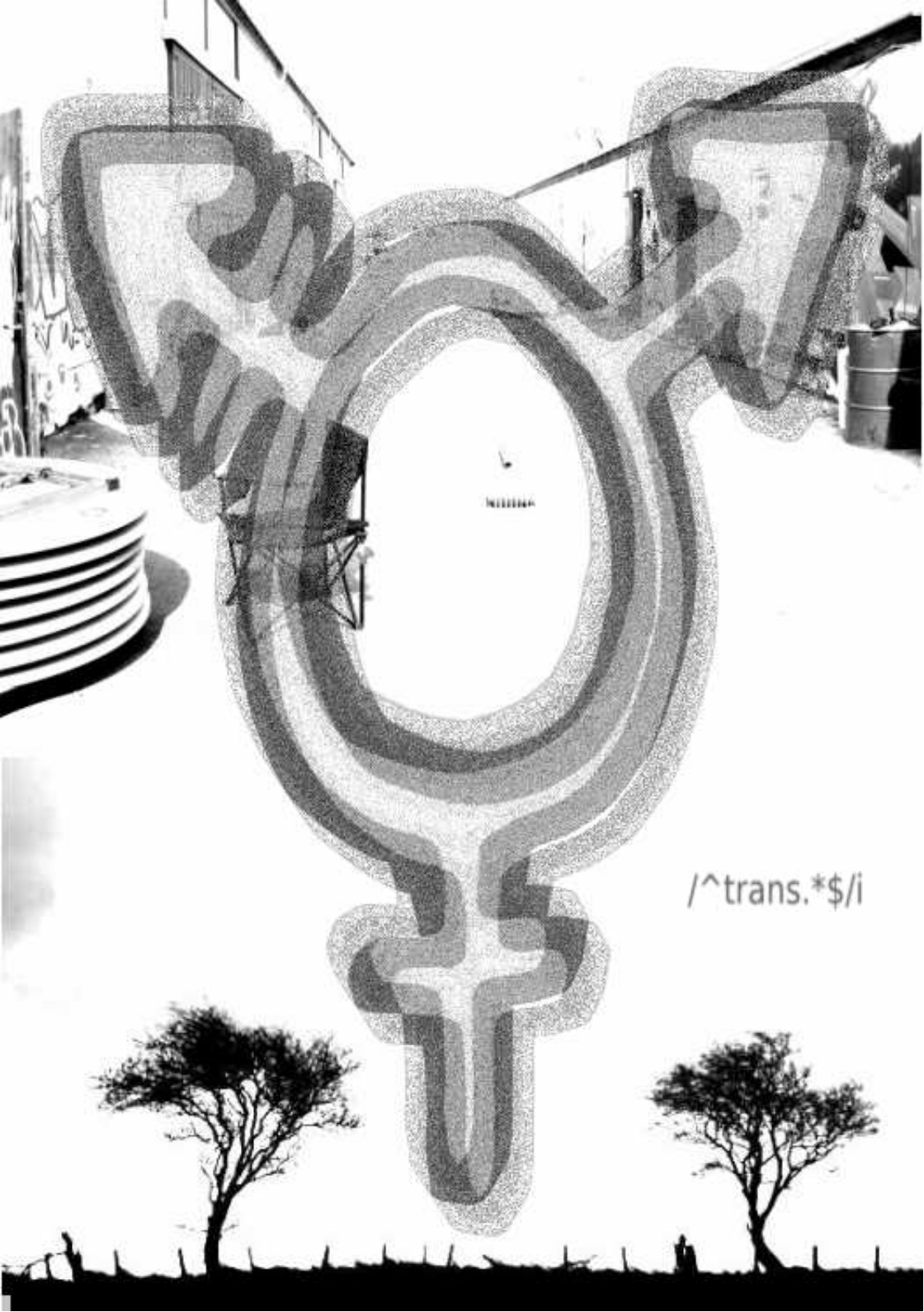


from cross to trans

trans
thoughts

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From cross to trans

A small history, a small zine, some writings that take us into the exploration, the fear, the justification, the days that have been mine over the past year, in solar time, an entire life when it comes to gender.

Pre-history is a poem, "*Cross-dressed walk*", as it sometimes is, when art precedes knowledge and inspection in the production of truth. Art is truth, indeed, but one that can not be measured within the scope of time.

And so it starts as cross dressing, with "*Cross dressing, feelings, meanings and thoughts*". A time gone by, many things have changed, this was nonetheless the begining of reflection, the birth of the mirror, of the echo that I would listen to for ever after.

A rant for sure, but one that is important in defining the relationship I have with my own struggles, "*Smashing binaries*" remains part of the path, the angry path, when I come across the world.

The truth as it stands now will not be revealed im "*Breastforms and solitudes*", the truth has gone away, and all that remains is a long road, and all that matters is the landscape around. Maybe flying has a meaning, but it makes us more lonely - thankfully our friends will always be there to write beautiful things about us : "*For a friend*"



*Everlasting thanks go to **Anna** for inspiration, support and friendship*

Cross-dressed walk



Will you come for a cross-dressed walk with me ?

I will wear my nicest skirt,

The one that's brown and red and yellow and has flowers on it.

Will you come for a cross-dressed walk with me ?

You could wear a pretty suit,

One with stripes down the side, and a shirt and a tie and a classy hat.

And as we walk through the forest,

The trees will transvestite for us,

They'll give up their summer pride,

Shed away their uniforms,

A fit of autumnal madness,

Full of colours and lights and smells.

It will be beautifull.

Will you come for a cross dressed walk with me ?

Cross dressing, feelings, meanings and thoughts



I've been cross dressing on a daily basis (to work, at the shops, travelling...) for over six months now. Something I started not really thinking about it has become part of who I am, of how I look at and understand myself. I use the term "cross dressing" in a wide sense, not only to refer to how I dress, but also to how I behave and feel about myself. Maybe I could've used gender bending or some other terms that may or may not apply, there's quite a lot of those, but cross dressing will do. It is the most visible manifestation of the change I have been going through, and it is how it began.

I have always been fascinated by people who cross the boundaries of gender norms - gender benders, cross dressers, transsexuals and all those that cannot be easily classified using existing categories for gender and sexuality. The first time this fascination transformed itself in a need (the first time I actually felt an impulse to wear make-up) was about five years ago, after watching a queer movie involving a character identified as male at birth who wears make-up and women's dresses but whose sexuality or gender is never clearly defined. I'm the passive kind and social pressure is strong, so it was only about a year and a half ago that I started wearing make up and skirts at parties. A year later, six months ago, I broke up from a long term relationship, and, what the hell, started cross dressing on a daily basis. At the time I was involved in a Free Shop, a free space organised by a group of activists, anarchists and squatters, where everything was donated, and everything was free. The availability of clothes and the fact it was a place in which I felt safe made it easy for me to start playing around.

A rail with skirts on attracts my attention and I feel exited even before I get there, browse through the skirts, see how they would fit me and think about what I could wear with them. — I walk down the streets, listening to my mp3 player, walking confidently as if I own the streets. I feel powerful. — I'm on a train, sitting down. I gather my skirt gently, close my legs together and delicately let my hands rest on my laps. My nail varnish is shining, I straighten my back and feel safe and at ease with myself. — I'm struggling with a mail server that's gone down, totally focused on my task, enjoying the challenge and the direct application of my technical skills.

Cross dressing comes first - there is no reasoning, no laid out plan of experimentation, no willful attempt to change the set order of things. Cross dressing just happens because it feels right, because it allows me to express who I am ; what comes next, how I deal with my masculinity and sexuality as well as the political implication of my acts happen because (or thanks to) cross dressing - they do not cause it. It is in this order that things have happened, and that cross dressing has allowed me to be someone my masculinity would not permit. When dressing using "men's clothes", I have never allowed myself to care about my image - how I look and dress (where I grew up, male gender roles were fairly limited). Even when tempted otherwise, I would always go for the practical, the rational, the allowed - the shame of doing otherwise always being stronger than the temptation. Shame is a powerful factor when it comes to regulating masculinity - I've been ashamed of showing emotions, ashamed of not achieving things, ashamed of being confused and uncertain, ashamed of not having many sexual partners, ashamed of letting people know I care about them. Cross dressing subverts

my masculinity at its base - it is a visual, direct, radical act that leaves no room for doubt - I am telling the world, and myself, that I am free not to act like a man ; and from there I can start exploring and dealing with my masculinity, the artificial set of behaviors and expressions of self that were imposed on me because I was born with a penis.

Someone asked me in the street once whether I was a man or a woman. This was meant as an insult - I definitely do not, nor do I try to, pass as a woman - but I thought the question pertinent. I don't mind being identified as a man, I go to the gents toilets, I have a beard and sometimes interrupt conversations to say a joke. At the same time I have not only been experimenting with the way I dress, but also how I behave - how I sit, how I relate to people, how I act in groups. I've been improving my listening skills, I've allowed myself to be shy and dependant, and I really love sitting cross legged. I would not feel comfortable saying "I am a man" anymore - as this entails much more than having a penis - but even when cross dressing everyday, no matter how much glitter I put on, I still benefit from the privileges of being a white middle class male. I am, in regards to my status and power within society, a man.

I'm sitting for an hour near a staircase, looking at people going by to see if there's a difference in the way men and women walk up and down stairs. I can't see any. — I'm waiting in the streets, and look at a women's legs. I think they're sexy, I wish I could have the same. — I'm playing cards with a group of men, drinking beer. The maleness of the atmosphere makes me feel uncomfortable, but I can't fight it. It over-powers me, and I have no choice but to be a man.

The mainstream depiction of cross dressers is that of mostly heterosexual men who do it for the erotic appeal. If this definition had been any closer to me, I might have tried to conform to it - thankfully the lack an appropriate definition has meant I have been free to experiment. I do not cross dress for erotic reasons in the sense that it does not arouse me (though it can make me feel sexy), and I do not fantasize about it - that does not mean however that my sexuality and cross dressing are two independent things. I can be attracted to women as well as men, by bodies as well as gender expressions, the degree and combination of which varies over time, depending on my mood and my environment. The sexual meaning of my cross dressing varies accordingly - I can cross dress to become something I desire or cross dress to make myself desirable ; and this can apply, again with varying degrees, to how I feel I am perceived, in terms of image and behaviour, and to how I feel about myself.

My everyday experience of cross dressing is also one that varies over time - I cross dress because it's fun and exciting, I cross dress because I'm feeling vulnerable, I cross dress because it's what I do by default, I cross dress because I want a world where you don't have to be anything, I cross dress to get noticed, I cross dress to be feminine. I feel ridiculous at times, and getting comments in the street is never pleasant. But beyond that, I live in an environment where my cross dressing is not only appreciated but encouraged and therefore rewarded (which is itself a factor that leads me to cross dress) because it's seen as a meaningful act. There are many different types, degrees and combinations of masculinities and femininities people use to express something about themselves - their age, whether they are parents, their social status and so on. Gender norms regulate the manifestation of self, and therefore how others interact with us. To be able to choose (consciously or unconsciously) what we want to express about ourselves, we must first liberate ourselves from gender norms - and this will require (or cause?) the demise or patriarchy.

I'm on the underground because I want to be away from the day light. I'm confused and angry with myself. This is all about sex - why don't I just deal with it and stop lying to myself—— I'm at a queer event, everybody is different, strange, beautiful, diffuse, ambiguous, aware and proud of their complexity. This is so good ; I'm at home at last.

We never do things for a single reason - in particular when it comes to topics as complicated and personal as gender. It's a constantly shifting and evolving set of feelings and emotions, a never ending redefinition of self as new understandings open new doors. I started cross dressing at a turning point in my life, and it has completely changed the way I look at myself. It's not just fun and exciting to play with gender norms, it's not just empowering to break away from my gender role : it's showed me there is still a lot to explore and discover, it's made life interesting in a way it hadn't been for a long time. It does not matter whether I continue to cross dress, revert back to my expected gender expressions, or explore further. In how I deal with my masculinity, express my femininity, explore my sexuality and in the way I've become aware of gender norms and expressions, cross dressing has opened a new world for me.



Smashing binaries



If we have been obsessed, in the past centuries, with classifying every human behaviour into numerous explicit categories, there remains, in all things, an overall binary selection : honest or criminal, legal or illegal, normal or pathological, child or adult, able or disabled, man or woman. This is not only to simplify administration forms with tick-boxes, but acts as a mean of control to ensure we all know our place and role.

It is important for people who commit illegal acts to know they are criminals - grey zones would open the door for more illegality. It is similarly important for people to know whether they are men or women, so that they know what is their role and place in society. Adding more categories will not do : people must know what they are, and binaries provide the best mechanism for this - if you are not one, then you are the other. We have a default for all binaries, white, able bodied, middle class, heterosexual, adult man. If you are not a man, you are a woman ; if you are not able bodied, you are disabled.

There is only one society, and you are either in it or out of it - in which case you must be reformed to fit in : children are sent to school to be trained, criminals are sent to prison to be reformed, people behaving in ways that are not accepted are sent to hospitals to be cured.

Challenges to the binary system, to the society that is one and whole, are either violently repressed or co-opted if they can be made to fit in : people categorized as homosexuals are no longer sent to hospitals to be cured, but the price that was paid for this is the requirement to define oneself within the binary system : you must be attracted to either men or women. Bisexuality can then be safely accepted : what matters, there again, is that you define your attractions, and that you do so in terms of the binary division of men and women. However if you are confused, uncertain or unstable about your sexuality, then you have a problem and must seek professional medical help so that you can be reformed into one of the appropriate, binary respecting categories.

We are attracted by all different sorts of criteria, different bodies, shapes, colours, hair styles, eyes - but we can only be attracted to one sex ; or rather while it's fine to have sex with someone even if we are not particularly interested in certain non-gendered parts of their body, we are expected, pressured, to only have sex with people whose gendered body parts we are attracted to. Moreover, it is something we must know, for sure, and that we cannot change. The first question people ask about a baby is whether it's a girl or a boy ; the first question people ask about sexuality (provided they don't assume heterosexuality by default) is whether you're attracted to men or to women.

If gender is something that is constructed, then using gendered body parts as the primary, immutable criteria for sexual attraction is also constructed : like gender, it is something we are trained into from the very beginning of our life, because it is a necessary element of the gender binary division that supports patriarchy.

Before we can smash patriarchy and other power structures, we have to bring our hammer, with force, on all binary systems, smash them into an infinity of components. We are not one society, but a multitude of individuals, groups, communities, sexualities, friends, collectives, relationships who live together, overlap, mingle and break apart in a constant flow of interactions.

Breastforms and solitudes



Once upon a time, I was a man.

Once upon a time, I was a man. By default, assigned as such, created as such, made a such, recorded as such, as a man, as only a man. That feels like a long time ago now. I'm not sure when I stopped being a man - at school, when I refused to act like the other boys, or later when I started having homosexual relationships ? Or even later than that when I started cross dressing and wearing make up ?

In every step of my life, I've become less of a man. Less of man - this is not a mistake. There are so many things that make a man, and it seems I have spent my life getting away from them. This process of getting away, of becoming less of a man, is one that I have never needed, or managed, to recognize as such - somehow things just happened. It is only recently that I have interpreted my life in terms of this process, as I have made yet another step, yet another change that has brought a new perspective - one that has, for the first time, been worrying me.

In many ways at school I didn't act like the other boys, and was excluded for it. Having grown up in a paranoid family, this was what I expected and I didn't think much of it. When I started my first homosexual relationship, I didn't think about it in itself either. I didn't want to be homosexual, but as soon as it happened I was happy, I didn't need to justify myself and so didn't think about it. Similarly cross dressing just happened - it was just something I did that didn't have to have a meaning.

Nobody ever questioned my homosexual relationships, and the fact I never had to explain them means I never had to think about them. The same wasn't true of cross dressing however, and I soon found myself needing to explain it - to others, first, but then to myself. Because as I started explaining it, I realised there was a lot more to it than I ever realised, than I ever knew. I started thinking and exploring relentlessly, this new world, myself, that I had at last discovered-created after many years lost in uncertainty.

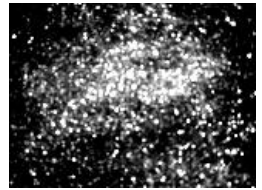
And I didn't, of course, stop at cross dressing, though at this time I haven't gone very far either. Not far, maybe, for an external viewer - but I have started doing something that, for me, has been very significant, confusing, disturbing, elating : I started wearing breastforms. I am not simply modifying my dresses anymore, I am not simply choosing to pick a different item in the clothing shop. Now I'm modifying my body, myself, my physical being. And it feels so right, it feels so good to be this way, it is so fulfilling to be seen this way - it scares me.

It scares me because, for the first time, it has defined a road ahead of me. I have never thought of the road ahead, I have never acted towards a destination, I have never thought "I want to be/ I am a woman" - I have always simply done what feels right. Everything I have done until now defines the road that is behind me - the one that makes me less of a man. But now, now, I'm modifying my body, and it feels so important. Because by modifying my body in this way, I am not becoming less of man - I am becoming more of woman. I am not just defined by the road behind me, I am now defining a road ahead of me.

Not having a destination, it is my acts that, to an observer, are defining this road - though I cannot say myself whether I will go that way. But this road can seem so clear at times - how can I be on a road that can be well defined without having ever meant to be ? Am I projecting mainstream binary interpretations, or am I refusing to acknowledge what I already know ? Am I scared of acknowledging I want to become a woman, or am I something else that does not match the binary expectations that my acts may create ? The answer, I know, does not exist yet - I will create it retrospectively through my acts, as I continue the ever lasting process of creating and defining myself, my truth and my past.



For my friend



For my friend

My friend is a hero.

She can be she.

She can be he as well.

And she can be Anselm.

I am not interested in any kind of truth about her anymore. We are bombarded with words constantly. Big and heavy ones are thrown upon us to describe, explain, and analyze ourselves and each other. But where are the light and soft ones? How do I come across the ones which like glitter fly around us and cover us with glamour and joy?

I am not a writer. I don't know how to transform a piece of paper with some letters on it into a breeze of glitter to surround you, Anselm. That's what would suit you.

To categorize, to put in the right place everybody and everything are for those cowards who believe it's possible to control the world through controlling their fears. Impose a name on it, and you will know it, you will have control over it, they think.

You are exploring.

You dare to visit plateaus which are too scary for others.

You travel and arrive without any intention to rule.

If you would like to keep travelling, do it and don't bother.

If you feel tired, insecure or alone, just take out your glitter and scatter it around you. Your friends will be conjured.

If you feel you are approaching or arrived to a place what everybody seems to know, don't bother. They might have a name for it but nobody will know what you know.

This knowledge is not that abstract one which chains objects and beings together into order. It is an other kind of knowledge which allows you to relate to the world as you would like to. Nobody will be able to fill encyclopaedias or forms on bureaucrats' desks with it. It can't be coded with the promise of universal translatability. But don't worry it does not mean that you are alone with it. Instead of educating others on rotund voice you can and you do play out this knowledge every day. We may not have sedimented rules for sharing it, but we do it anyway.

Thanks for sharing who you are!

Anna

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but if you can
donate a bit to
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